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LANZAROTE
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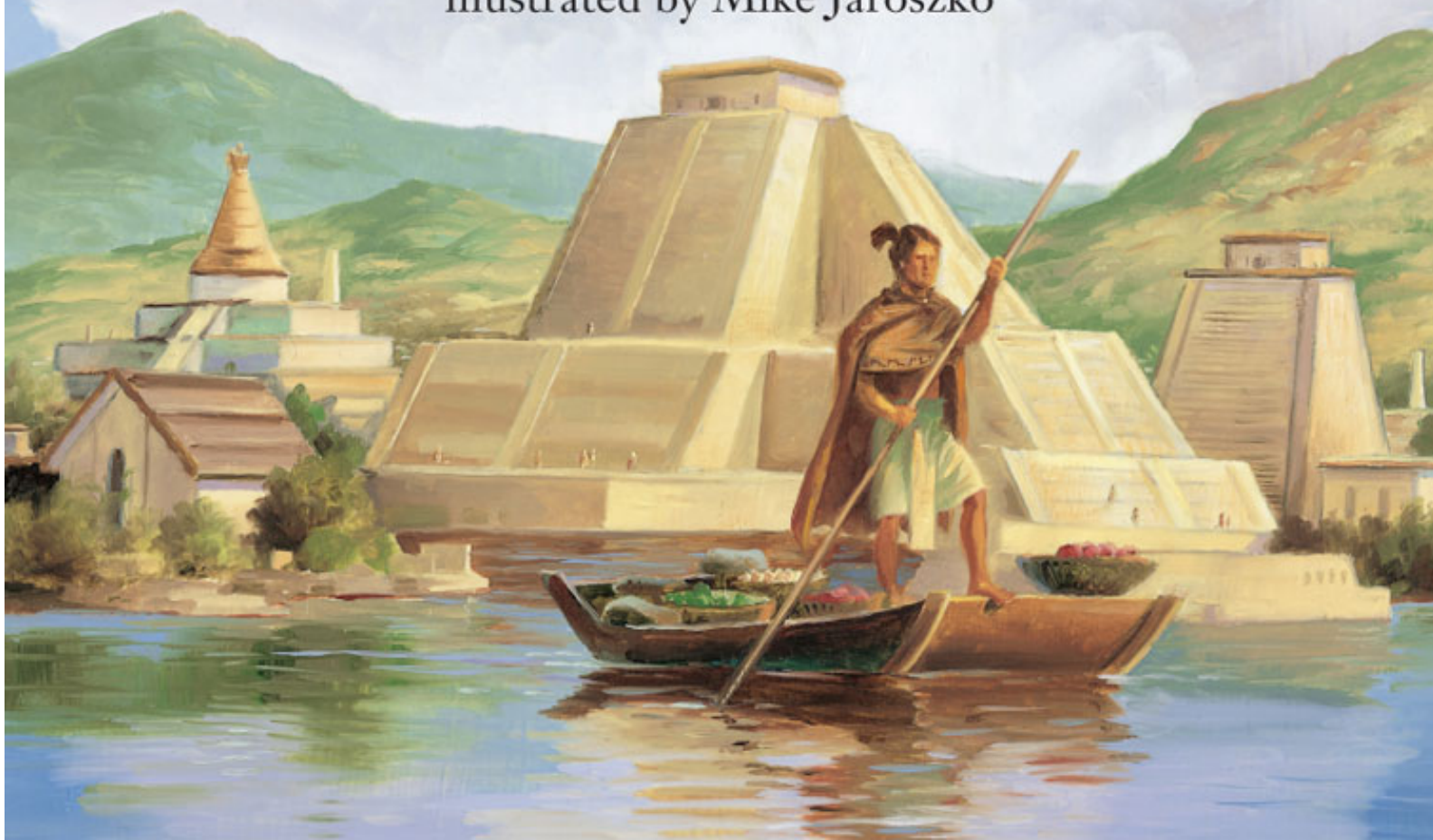
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

Vocabulary Readers

The City on the Lake

by Stanford Makishi

illustrated by Mike Jaroszko



Number of Words: 642

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The City on the Lake



by Stanford Makishi
illustrated by Mike Jaroszko

Strategy Focus

As you read, **evaluate** how well the author describes the growth of an Aztec city.



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

BOSTON

Key Vocabulary

adorned decorated

causeways raised roads across water or marshes

conquered defeated in battle

empire a large area made up of many territories under one government

intricate complicated; made up of many details

metropolis a major city; a center of culture

momentous extremely important

sites locations

tributes gifts that people give to leaders

Word Teaser

Sometimes it takes just a moment for something _____ to happen.

The Beginning

About 800 years ago, the Aztec people lived in the land we now call Mexico. The Aztecs did not stay in one place for long. They wandered throughout the land, hunting snakes, insects, and other animals for food. Sometimes they fought other groups of people to survive.

Over time, the Aztecs got tired of wandering. They decided to find a place to settle. They wanted to build a city where they could be safe.



The Aztecs believed that their sun god would help them find a good **site** for a city. They searched all over, waiting for a sign from their god.

Then, in 1325, the Aztecs saw an eagle on a small island in the middle of a lake. The bird sat on a cactus, holding a snake in its beak. The Aztecs believed this was the sign they had been waiting for! They would build their city on this island. They would name it Tenochtitlán (tay-nok-teet-lan).

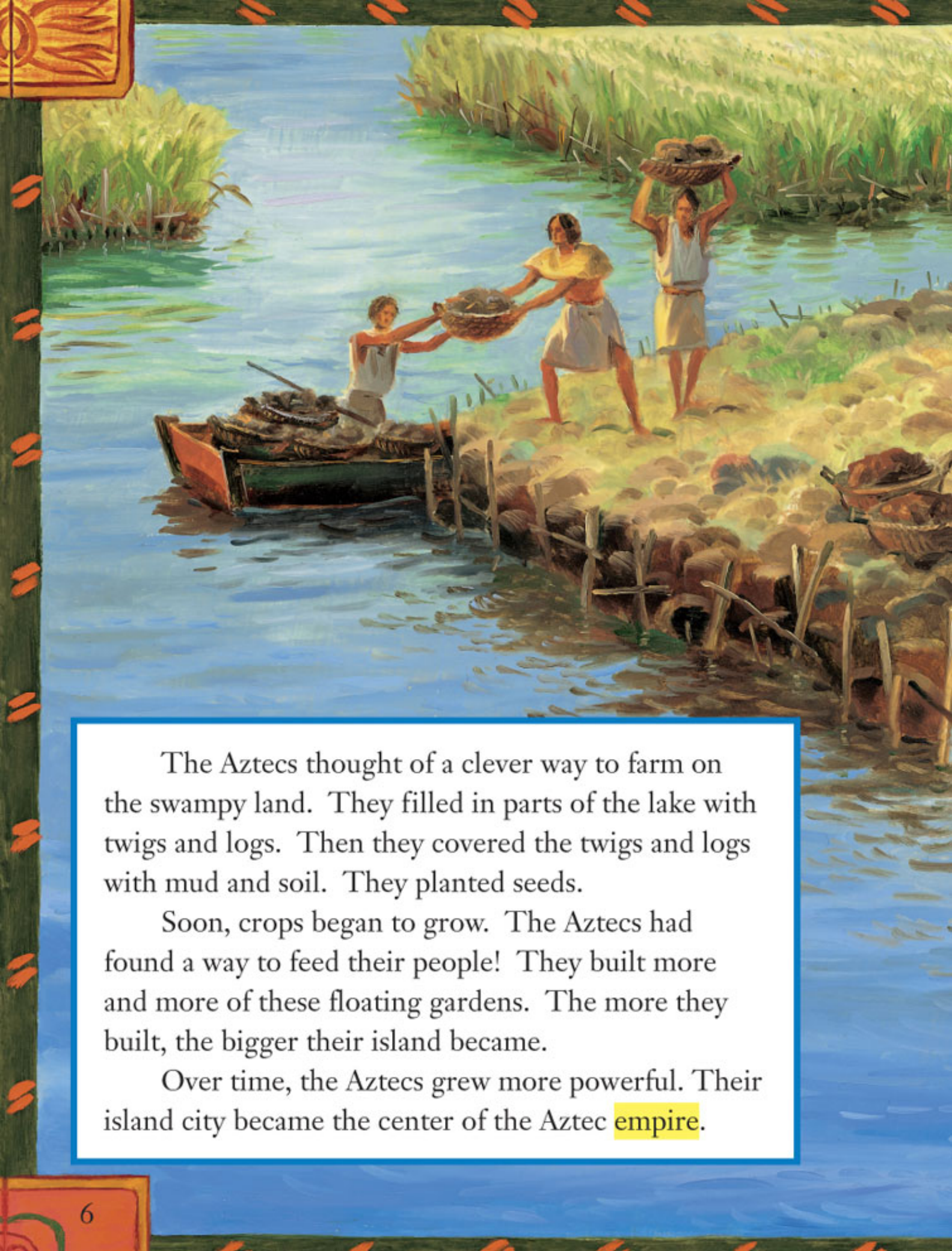




Building on the Lake

Building a city in the middle of a lake would not be easy. It was hard to get to the tiny island from the mainland. The ground was mostly rocks and mud. It would be difficult to farm.

But the Aztecs did not complain. They believed in the wisdom of their sun god. So they began to build on the small island in the lake.



The Aztecs thought of a clever way to farm on the swampy land. They filled in parts of the lake with twigs and logs. Then they covered the twigs and logs with mud and soil. They planted seeds.

Soon, crops began to grow. The Aztecs had found a way to feed their people! They built more and more of these floating gardens. The more they built, the bigger their island became.

Over time, the Aztecs grew more powerful. Their island city became the center of the Aztec **empire**.



The Aztec Empire

The emperor was the leader of the Aztec empire. The emperor often sent people to spy on the Aztecs' enemies. The spies would tell the emperor about the enemies. Then the emperor would send the Aztec army to attack the enemies and defeat them.

In this way, the Aztecs **conquered** many other people. The conquered people had to make payments of food and treasures to the Aztec emperors. These payments were called **tributes**. Tributes made the empire richer and stronger.





A Metropolis Grows

The Aztecs did not always battle with their neighbors. In the early 1400s, the Aztecs made an agreement with two neighboring groups. They promised to help each other in times of war.

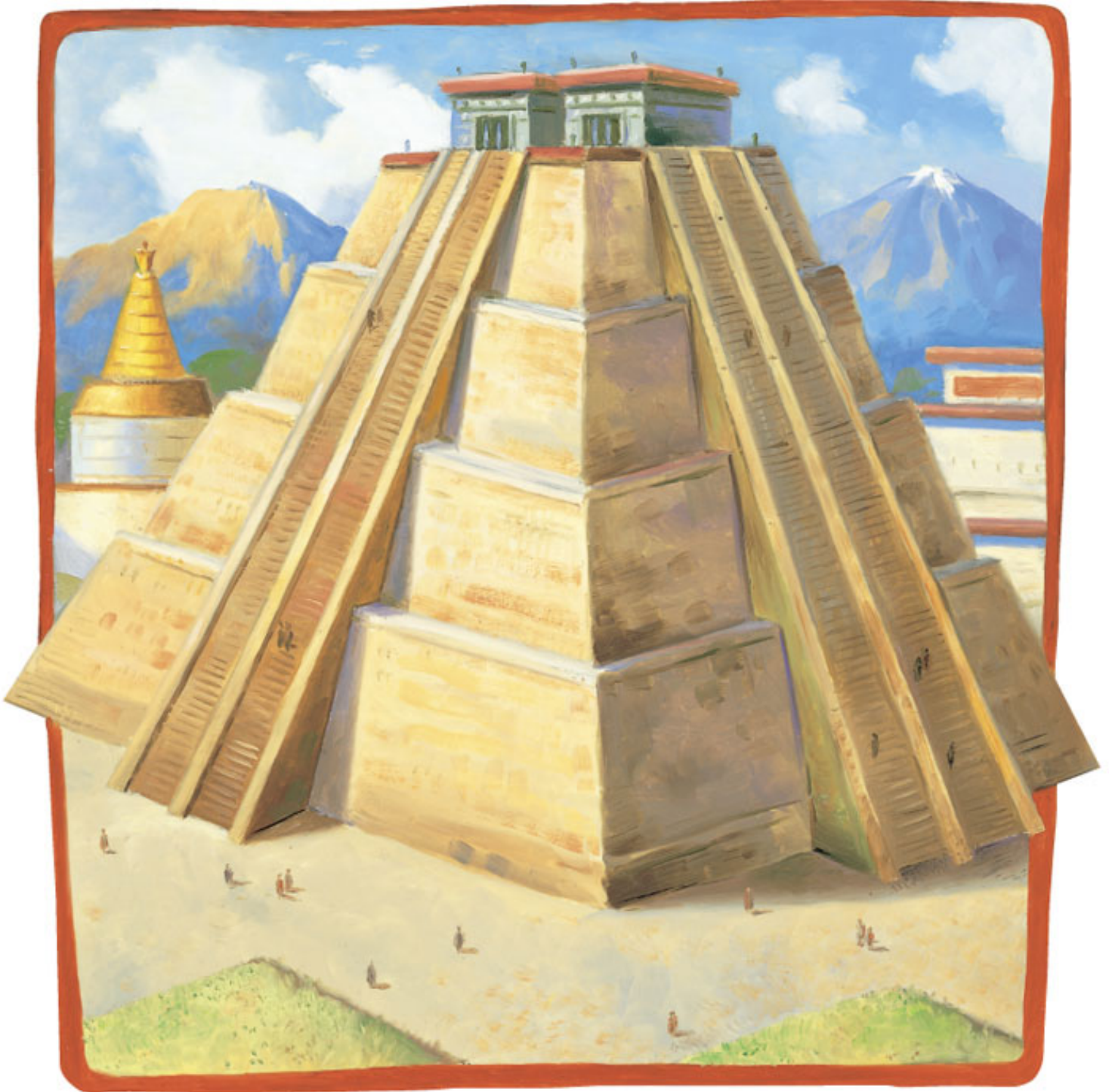
This **momentous** decision had lasting importance for the Aztecs. With the help of these neighboring groups, the Aztec empire grew even more rapidly. Tenochtitlán's population kept increasing. It became a rich and powerful **metropolis**.



As their empire grew, the Aztecs improved their capital city in several ways. They built a complicated, intricate system of canals and roads. They also built three raised roadways across the lake. These causeways joined the city to the mainland. Now it was easier for people and goods to travel to and from the city.



The Aztecs also built great temples. Stairs on the sides of the temples led to the top. The stairs were decorated and adorned with beautiful stone carvings.



The Aztecs built a grand palace for their emperor. The palace was a giant building. Magnificent paintings and carvings lined the palace walls.



The End of the Empire

Tenochtitlán continued to grow. Experts today think that the population of Tenochtitlán reached about 250,000.



But the Aztec empire did not last forever. In 1519, Hernando Cortés and his army arrived from Spain. The Spanish army had guns and other powerful weapons. The Aztecs could not fight against them and win. The Spanish army soon conquered the Aztecs. Their great empire had seen its last day.



Responding

Putting Words to Work

1. Complete the following sentence:
The fancy dress was **adorned** with **intricate** _____.
2. Describe a **momentous** event in your life.
3. Does the author think that the Aztecs chose a good **site** for their city? How can you tell?
4. Why were the **causeways** important in Tenochtitlán?
5. **PARTNER ACTIVITY:** Think of a word you learned in the text. Explain its meaning to your partner and give an example.

Answer to Word Teaser

momentous

Word Builder

What might you find in a big **metropolis** today?

Copy the chart below. Fill in the chart with buildings, transportation, food, and fun places you might find in a metropolis.

Buildings	Transportation	Food	Fun Places
skyscrapers	subway	supermarkets	parks

Write About It

Write a paragraph about a city near where you live.

Use some of the words from your Word Builder chart in your paragraph.

Key Vocabulary

adorned
causeways
conquered
empire
intricate
metropolis
momentous
sites
tributes

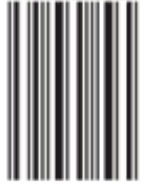
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